

GRS Certification Readiness Checklist for Manufacturers

A practical, manufacturer-focused checklist to identify documentation, traceability, production, environmental, social and chemical gaps before a GRS certification audit.

What this checklist helps you solve

GRS certification can become difficult when a manufacturer has recycled material but cannot prove its origin, movement, processing, quantities, or supporting controls. This checklist turns the broad requirements into a practical **GRS certification readiness review** you can work through before approaching a certification body.

GRS in simple terms

The **Global Recycled Standard (GRS)** verifies and tracks recycled materials through the supply chain. It also covers additional processing requirements related to social practices, environmental management and chemical use.

Third-party certification and chain-of-custody controls are central to the system.

Quick self-assessment

- **Recycled inputs identified** — Can you clearly identify every recycled material used in your GRS products?
- **Suppliers documented** — Do you have current supplier and certification evidence for relevant inputs?
- **Material flow mapped** — Can you trace material from receipt to finished product and sale?
- **Production records available** — Can production quantities, inputs, outputs and wastage be supported by records?
- **Inventory reconciles** — Can stock and material-ledger figures be explained and reconciled?
- **Site controls implemented** — Are environmental, social and chemical procedures actually operating at the facility?
- **Claims controlled** — Do product and marketing claims match the certification scope and applicable rules?

How to use this checklist

Mark each item as **Ready / Partly Ready / Not Ready**. Prioritise gaps that affect material eligibility, chain of custody, certified volume, or the ability to demonstrate actual implementation. Keep evidence together instead of waiting until the audit date.

1. Recycled Material & Supplier Readiness

Your first checkpoint is the recycled input itself. Manufacturers should know what material they are buying, who supplies it, what certification evidence supports it, and how it enters the certified production chain.

Recycled material checklist

- **Material category confirmed** — Confirm whether each input is pre-consumer or post-consumer and whether it meets the applicable GRS definition.
- **Supplier identity recorded** — Maintain supplier name, site information, material description and relevant commercial records.
- **Certification status checked** — Verify applicable supplier certification and supporting documentation before relying on a certified input.
- **Recycled content data available** — Maintain quantity, material type and relevant percentage information needed for production and claims.
- **Reclaimed material evidence organised** — Where applicable, maintain the current reclaimed-material documentation required for the supply chain.
- **Input specifications controlled** — Ensure purchase specifications and internal material descriptions match what is actually received.

2026 traceability update manufacturers should know

Textile Exchange published GRS 5.0 on July 1, 2026. The updated GRS implementation manual is effective from December 31, 2026. The 2026 update strengthens tracking of reclaimed material and aligns the system with the revised Reclaimed Material Declaration Form (RMDF). The RMDF becomes mandatory for GRS/RCS certifications from December 31, 2026.

Supplier red flags to investigate

Be cautious when supplier documentation has inconsistent material names, unexplained quantity differences, expired certification information, unclear recycled-input origin, or records that cannot be connected to the material received. Resolve these gaps before using the documentation to support certified production.

Manufacturer action

Create a supplier evidence folder for each relevant input. Keep certification evidence, purchase documents, material specifications, declarations and related correspondence together so the source of each recycled input can be demonstrated quickly.

2. Chain of Custody & Material Traceability Checklist

A manufacturer should be able to explain the journey of certified material through its own operation—from receipt and storage to production, finished goods and sales documentation.

Can you trace one batch backwards?

Pick one finished product and ask: Which raw material was used? Which supplier supplied it? When was it received? Where was it stored? Which production order consumed it? What quantity was used? What finished quantity resulted? Which sales documents support the certified claim? If your team cannot answer these questions using records, traceability is not yet audit-ready.

Traceability checklist

- **Receiving records** — Record supplier, date, material, quantity, certification information and relevant lot/batch details.
- **Identification system** — Use lot, batch, stock or equivalent controls that help identify certified material internally.
- **Segregation/control** — Maintain controls appropriate to your certification model so certified and non-certified materials are not incorrectly mixed.
- **Production records** — Keep production orders, bills of materials, input/output quantities and relevant wastage or conversion information.
- **Inventory records** — Maintain reliable opening balances, receipts, usage, transfers and closing balances.
- **Material ledger controls** — Reconcile material quantities regularly and investigate unexplained differences.
- **Sales documentation** — Maintain documents supporting certified products and applicable transaction-certificate requirements.

The “paper trail gap”

A supplier certificate alone does not prove that your finished product is correctly supported. The evidence needs to connect **input** → **inventory** → **production** → **output** → **sale**. A simple internal reconciliation routine can identify problems before an auditor does.

Practical tip

Maintain an evidence index showing **document name, date/period, responsible person, related material/product, and storage location**. This makes audit preparation faster and reduces last-minute document searches.

3. Production, Site & Process Readiness

GRS readiness is not only about certificates and paperwork. Your production floor, processes and operating controls should match the documented scope and procedures.

Production readiness checklist

- **Certified products defined** — List products intended to carry or support GRS claims and confirm they are within the applicable certification scope.
- **Process map prepared** — Document each relevant processing step and identify where certified material enters, moves and exits.
- **Site scope verified** — Confirm the physical facilities and processes involved in certified production are correctly identified.
- **Production controls implemented** — Ensure employees know how certified materials and production orders are identified and controlled.
- **Outsourced processes reviewed** — Identify subcontracted or outsourced processing and ensure required controls and records are available.
- **Non-conforming material controlled** — Define what happens when material, records or products do not meet requirements.

Environmental management checklist

- **Environmental policy** — Maintain a documented policy covering relevant environmental responsibilities.
- **Waste management** — Keep appropriate waste segregation, storage, recycling and disposal records.
- **Wastewater controls** — Where applicable, maintain treatment, monitoring, testing and disposal evidence.
- **Energy/resource monitoring** — Track relevant energy or resource consumption and improvement actions.
- **Legal compliance** — Maintain applicable environmental permits, consents, clearances, reports and other regulatory records.

Why this matters

A certification audit may compare what your procedures say with what your facility actually does. A practical GRS readiness review should therefore include both document review and operational verification. If a process has changed, update the documentation before the audit.

4. Social, Chemical & Documentation Readiness

Manufacturers should prepare evidence that shows relevant workplace and chemical controls are implemented consistently—not created only for the certification audit.

Social responsibility checklist

- **Health & safety procedures** — Maintain relevant workplace health and safety procedures and responsibilities.
- **Training evidence** — Keep training records for relevant employees and operational roles.
- **Worker documentation** — Maintain applicable worker-related records and policies required for the facility.
- **Incident/corrective records** — Document relevant incidents, corrective actions and follow-up where applicable.
- **Implementation evidence** — Check that site practices match written procedures and assigned responsibilities.

Chemical management checklist

- **Chemical inventory** — Maintain an up-to-date list of chemicals used in relevant GRS processing.
- **Safety information** — Keep current safety data sheets and supplier information where applicable.
- **Purchasing controls** — Review purchasing and approval procedures for chemicals used on GRS products.
- **Restricted-substance controls** — Check applicable GRS chemical restrictions and supporting evidence against the latest requirements.
- **Storage & handling** — Verify practical controls for safe storage, handling and use of chemicals.

Audit document pack

Before the audit, organise a controlled evidence pack covering **certification scope, supplier evidence, purchase and receiving records, production records, inventory/material ledger data, sales records, environmental documentation, social records, chemical records, policies, training and corrective actions**. The exact evidence required depends on your scope and certification body.

Do not confuse “documented” with “implemented”

A signed policy is only one piece of evidence. Auditors may need to see records, interviews, observations and operational controls that demonstrate the system is functioning in practice.

5. Final GRS Readiness Review & Next Steps

Use this final page as your management sign-off before starting or renewing your GRS certification process.

Final readiness checklist

- **Scope confirmed** — Products, sites, processes, materials and intended claims are clearly defined.
- **Supplier evidence complete** — Relevant supplier and recycled-input documentation is current and organised.
- **Traceability demonstrated** — A sample finished product can be traced back through production and to its certified inputs.
- **Quantities reconcile** — Purchases, inventory, production and outputs can be explained with records.
- **Environmental controls implemented** — Relevant environmental procedures and records are operational.
- **Social controls implemented** — Relevant workplace and safety controls are documented and functioning.
- **Chemical controls implemented** — Chemical inventory and applicable restrictions are controlled.
- **Corrective actions closed** — Known gaps have owners, deadlines and evidence of closure.
- **Claims reviewed** — Marketing and product claims are consistent with applicable certification and claims rules.
- **Audit evidence indexed** — Your team can locate supporting documents without relying on one person's memory.

Conclusion

GRS certification readiness is strongest when **recycled-material sourcing, chain of custody, production controls, environmental management, social responsibility and chemical management** work together as one documented system. For manufacturers, the biggest risk is often not a missing certificate—it is an unexplained gap between what was purchased, what was processed, what was recorded and what was claimed.

Completing this checklist before the certification audit can help your team identify documentation gaps, strengthen traceability, assign corrective actions and prepare evidence in a more organised way. Requirements can vary by scope and may change as Textile Exchange transitions standards, so always confirm the current applicable requirements with your certification body.

Need help preparing for GRS Certification?

UA Consultants can support manufacturers with GRS readiness and certification preparation through gap assessment, documentation review, traceability support, environmental and compliance review, and audit-readiness guidance. The focus is on practical systems your team can maintain—not paperwork created only for the audit.

Start your GRS readiness assessment.

Visit www.uaconsultants.net to discuss your manufacturing scope and certification requirements with UA Consultants.

Current-reference note: Technical points in this checklist were checked against Textile Exchange's current GRS resources, including GRS-101 V5.0, GRS-201 V5.0 and current standards-transition guidance. GRS 5.0 was published July 1, 2026; its implementation manual is effective December 31, 2026. Certification requirements and transition arrangements should be confirmed with your certification body.